

## **Special Education Modifications**

The State of New Mexico currently requires modifications for all students with special needs. Barry McDowell, a special education teacher in Carlsbad, has compiled the following information to assist teachers who need to make modifications to the Chihuahuan Desert Lab.

### **Characteristics of Special Education Students**

Students with special needs are truly varied and wonderful. Many have learning disabilities that require assistance from educators. Others may have mental impairments that necessitate drastic modifications of the content. This group of individuals can contribute to the lab experience as well as gain important life skills for themselves. We hope that no student is neglected due to causes beyond their control.

When dealing with students who have been in the special education system, it is important to realize the history of their academics. Many of these students have been in self-contained classrooms that have modified their curriculum. This may mean that many of the concepts and facts presented in this lab course may be unfamiliar to them. Many students with learning disabilities may read on the 6th grade level or below. It is therefore important to realize that they may not understand this material on their own, but may need to have the information restated in more common terms.

As a general rule, students who have received special education services will not appear different from other students. Their differences are not physical, but in the way they process information. Some can become frustrated very easily when they feel they are going to fail or that they are different from everyone else. Some may appreciate the challenge to prove themselves, but many will compensate for inadequacies in less desirable ways. Try to be compassionate when dealing with these latter students, since they may have impulse control problems or are merely trying to find a way to get out of the required work.

Please realize that federal laws require **Least Restrictive Environments** for students with special needs. If it has been determined that a student should be in a regular education class, it is not the teacher's role to exclude that student. In fact, if the student's IEP includes regular education classes with modifications, the requirement is for the teacher to make those modifications. If you are in doubt about how to accomplish these, check with the case manager for the student. That person should be familiar with the student and what is needed for him/her to be successful. Remember, modifications are not to give the student an advantage, it is to level the playing field by compensating for the areas of disability.

### **General Modifications**

Each student is an individual, in regular or special education. Do not use the same modifications for all students or even for all students in special education. Spend some time evaluating your students to determine their strengths and weaknesses. When in doubt, contact the special education personnel in your building to assist you with

information. To help you out, there are some general modifications you can try in your classroom. They are listed on a separate sheet with check boxes to mark for different students.

## **Individual Education Plan Modifications Form**

Student \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

- ( ) Preferential Seating**
- ( ) Study Carrel**
- ( ) Shortened Assignments**
  - ( ) require fewer correct responses for similar grade
  - ( ) reduce the length of the assignment
  - ( ) break the assignment into a series of smaller assignments
- ( ) Visual/Auditory Strategies**
  - ( ) give instructions through several methods (written, oral, demonstration, etc.)
  - ( ) use different format materials to teach the same content (puzzles, games, tapes, etc.)
  - ( ) reduce the reading level of the assignment (reword, paraphrase, etc.)
  - ( ) substitute for lower level reading materials
  - ( ) accept alternate forms of work (oral, taped, typed, etc.)
  - ( ) use outline when presenting material
  - ( ) allow taping of class session and/or lecture
  - ( ) allowing copying of notes from/by another student
  - ( ) speak more slowly
- ( ) Enrichment**
  - ( ) provide hands-on learning experiences
  - ( ) use independent study experiences
  - ( ) utilize peer tutoring
  - ( ) underline/outline major points
  - ( ) provide student aids (hints, cue cards, guides, calculators)
  - ( ) use handouts, transparencies, maps, charts to emphasize major points
- ( ) Repetition of Instructions**
  - ( ) accompany oral directions with written directions for future reference
  - ( ) repeat directions, then have the student explain the directions to you
- ( ) Additional Time**
  - ( ) allow more time on specific assignments
  - ( ) avoid placing student under pressure of time limits
  - ( ) allow class work to be taken home to be completed

- ☐ **Immediate Reinforcement**
  - ☐ reinforce appropriate behavior immediately
  - ☐ recognize student on-task time
  - ☐ acknowledge class participation
  - ☐ grade work in class
- ☐ **Progress Reports**
  - ☐ weekly grade sheets
  - ☐ 3 week progress reports
- ☐ **Acceleration**
- ☐ **Immediate Feedback**
  - ☐ recognize student on-task time
  - ☐ grade work in class
- ☐ **Test Modifications**
  - ☐ reduce the number of exams
  - ☐ open book exams
  - ☐ allow more time to complete
  - ☐ reduce the length of the exam
  - ☐ use more objective questions
  - ☐ give oral exam
  - ☐ reduce reading level of exam
  - ☐ read test items to student
  - ☐ give take-home test
  - ☐ substitute an assignment for a test
- ☐ **Pretest Review**
  - ☐ study questions
  - ☐ review of actual test questions
- ☐ **Contract**
  - ☐ for assignments
  - ☐ for behavior
- ☐ **Grading Modifications**
  - ☐ pass/fail, S/U, etc.
  - ☐ lessen weight of testing